This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 13 SAN SALVADOR 003459

SIPDIS

STATE For CA/EX, WHA/EX,
WHA/CEN, OIG/ISP, M/FSI/SPAS, CA/VO,
CA/FPP, CA/OCS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: CMGT CVIS CASC KFRD AFSI ASIG ES
SUBJECT: FY-2006 Consular Package Narrative for San
SalvadorREF: STATE 207085
Management:

A) Please certify that your post contact information on the
CCD is current and complete.

Post certifies that Post contact information on the CCD is
current and complete.

B) Are there any additional fields you would like to see
added to the post directories on CCD? If so, which?

No.

C) Do you have sufficient staff to meet consular MPP
objectives? If you believe you do not, please describe
steps you have taken to maximize efficiency. Note any
special circumstances at your post that hinder
productivity. Specify the number, type, and grade of
personnel you would need in order to fully meet MPP
objectives.

No.

Current staffing levels are slightly strained in the
Immigrant Visa (IV) Unit which experienced more than double
the number of applications over the last fiscal year. Post
anticipates this increase will continue over the next
several years, and that it is not simply a matter of DHS
backlog shifting overseas. In the case of El Salvador, the
growing population (GOES estimates are as high as 30 percent
of all Salvadorans in the world live in the US - the
majority are illegal or under Temporary Protected Status
(TPS)) of Salvadorans in the U.S. is impacting - and will
continue to impact - IV workload. In order to meet
anticipated growth in IV applications over the next five
years, Post would benefit from an additional rotational visa
clerk position at the FSN-6 level. This position would
assist the Unit in completing documentary requirements as
the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sends more
incomplete applications in order to clear out its own
backlog, and to continue the Section's aggressive anti-fraud
and anti-gang efforts. Post currently averages 60 applicant
interviews daily, but estimates that to maintain a backlog-
free unit and to meet Department issuance requirements, the
Unit should be conducting an average of 85 interviews daily,
nearly a 40% increase in appointments.

Non Immigrant Visa (NIV) applications have held more or less
steady over the past few years at between 55,000 and 60,000.

In an effort to tackle resource problems now, both the NIV
and IV units are implementing process reforms which we
expect will improve productivity of current staffing. For
example, the NIV team is rolling out a mandatory Electronic
Visa Application Form (EVAF)program in February 2006, and
the IV unit is outsourcing the appointment system to
Computer Sciences Corporation (Teletech), expected to go
live December 15, 2005.

While these process improvements may relieve some of the
current pressure on the visa units, increased detection of
fraud by the Fraud Prevention Unit (FPU) and a more formal
and professional Correspondence and Information Unit (CIU)
are expected to absorb the resource savings realized by
those process improvements. We also are developing new
databases for both the FPU and CIU to increase their
functionality and efficiency in the long term.

On the American Citizen Services (ACS) side, the Unit would
benefit in the long term by the addition of an FSN-5
receptionist. The Unit has conducted periodic process
reviews, led by both the former Consul General and a summer
intern with a management background, and implemented
procedures that shortened average wait time by 30 minutes or
more for certain services. The Unit can further improve
procedures but optimal efficiency will not be attained
without additional staff. We anticipate this situation will
intensify as the ACS workload grows. The trend of increasing
passport applications more than doubled from FY 2003 to FY
2005, and we expect at least an additional 10% growth in FY
¶2006. Some reasons for anticipated growth include a steady

increase of Federal Benefits collectees in country and a large and growing Salvadoran expat community in the U.S., who transmit citizenship, return for visits to their homeland, and return for retirement.

D) Please indicate if you have requested any staffing increases and/or grade increases through the MPP process.

Until this year, Post's MPP strategies did not significantly incorporate consular elements. A thorough review of our Mission strategies this year, however, resulted in the Executive Office decision to include Homeland Security (visa issuance) as one of Post's top two priorities. Within this year's MPP, Post will request one FSN-6 visa clerk and an ACS receptionist, per above.

On a related note, we began a comprehensive re-CAJE exercise for the Consular Section circa six months ago in collaboration with Post's Human Resources Office,. In October 2005, we completed the first of our position reviews - the Visa Supervisor - which was upgraded from a FSN-8 to a FSN-10 position. Depending upon the results of this exercise, current position grades and FSN hierarchy may change. Certainly, FSN duties are more complex today, as we delegated some tasks to the FSNs in an effort to make the best use of our in-house talent as we tackle workload increases.

E) Do you have sufficient space to meet consular MPP objectives? If you believe you do not, describe the nature of the space limitations. Note steps post has taken to address these limitations, including development of design proposals, allocation of post funds, requests for OBO or CA funding, etc.

No.

Starting in FY2000, the OIG recommended increasing the number of interview windows and the size of the applicant waiting areas. OBO responded during FY2000 with a $70,000 engineering study, the results of which were formalized into a decision memorandum sent to the Chief Operating Officer at OBO. At that time, funding limitations prevented further action, and no further progress was made.   Again, in FY-2004, the Consular Improvement Initiative dedicated a million dollars to the expansion of the Consular Section, However, due to the compressed timeframe, the funds could not be obligated by year's end, so the funding was withdrawn and the project sidelined once again. Since this time, Post has requested funds for a feasibility study to review this project again.

The ACS Unit, in particular, does not have sufficient space to meet the MPP objective of improving services to American citizens residing in and visiting El Salvador. Space limitations currently prevent those Amcits applying for routine consular services from receiving assistance as quickly as they should. The in-house construction of one additional ACS interviewing window would relieve some of the stress on ACS window space to meet short-term demand increases. This construction would enable the ACS unit to add a receptionist and accommodate the current personnel, including two data processing FSNs and one interviewing/adjudicating consular officer who work simultaneously to provide prompt service to Amcits and their families. While this may meet short-term demand, the volume of ACS work is anticipated to grow significantly over the next 10 to 15 years, necessitating a much expanded ACS waiting area and the construction of three to five additional interview windows to maintain the quality of service currently provided to American citizens and other ACS clients.

On the visa side, due to changing/increased processing requirements, biometrics, and applicant volume, almost all our data entry occurs outside the hardline (5 positions). To bring visa FSNs and staff behind the hardline and into a secure (i.e., meeting explosive protection requirements) area as well as to address workload (especially IV) growth, Post anticipates needing a minimum of five additional windows now and an additional five windows in the coming two years.

Post reviewed various possibilities for more efficiently utilizing existing floor space as it appeared to be the least expensive alternative. We find, however, that recent moves by other agencies at Post to regionalize their operations in El Salvador significantly reduced available open floor space. There simply is not enough available area to expand within existing structures, and allow for a sizable increase in required operations. Further, as Salvadoran immigrants in the U.S. are now as high as two million, any investment of funds should build in room for future growth in consular operations.

F) Are you currently in a construction cycle (planning,

construction or acceptance)? If so, please indicate the status of your project and any significant issues that have arisen or that you expect to arise.

Post requested monies in 7905 to support an A and E study to build a consular annex next to our current Chancery building.
G) Describe any management practices (such as off-site fee collection, use of a user pays call center, courier passback, post hosted web appointment system, business programs) that post has instituted or discontinued in the past year. Was the change effective?

The Consular Section implemented a number of improved management practices over the past fiscal year, including a consular automated telephone information service, ACS passback service, consular video for the NIV process, EER management process for FSNs, and the Group Visa validation program.

Consular Automated Telephone Information Service. In September 2005, the Section implemented a telephone tree with recorded information to assist prospective (especially ACS) clients. Figures from our first two months of operation indicate this service absorbs circa 500 calls per week. This phone service complements, but does not replace, live information systems served by our FSN staff (CIU and ACS) and Visa Information Center. While the system is called frequently, it is too new to fully assess its impact on the work flow of the ACS unit.

ACS Passback Service. In September 2005, the ACS unit implemented a courier passback option for U.S. passport applicants. While this has not significantly affected operations to date, we anticipate it will have a greater impact as the overall workload of the unit increases. In contrast to the existing passback service supporting the visa units, the ACS passback service is optional for U.S. citizens.

Consular Video. The Section is proud to report that its consular video is complete and playing on three television sets in the visa waiting area as of September 2005. Our video explains the visa process to applicants as they wait, and has already produced great results in terms of the organization of the applicant flow and easing anxiety among applicants. The video is also on our Internet site, for easy access for anyone interested in understanding the actual step-by-step process. This video can be viewed at (http://www.elsalvador.usembassy.gov/consular /english/video/ index.html). Perhaps more useful, our video scripts, timelines, and working documents may be accessed by any post using our intranet site at:(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offi ces/CONS/turnke y/customerserv/videoproject.html).

EER Management Process. In August 2005, the Consular Section streamlined EER management overview for FSNs, including tracking all FSN review cycles, use of a standard EER process worksheet, and regular review by the Visa Chief. The Visa Supervisor oversees this process from start to finish, which is aimed at increasing participation by FSNs in their EER process through a "consultation" with their rater and reviewing as a regular part of the process, regular counseling sessions throughout the year, and the encouragement of "brag sheet" submission by FSNs to aid in fair and complete representation of their accomplishments. Whereas the EER process had often sparked discontent and allegations of unfairness in the past, this process successfully reduced complaints by giving more active participation to the rated employee, including regular review by the FSO Visa Chief. Please see: (http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/mgt/perfo rmance.html).

Institutionalized "group visa" validation studies. In August 2005, the NIV Unit implemented a new 100% return check on all "group visa" applicants, which includes all H2B temporary workers, musical groups, athletic groups, and crewmembers. The purpose is to track "good use" of visas and to detect fraud by company/profession/region. We are currently reviewing preliminary data generated from this program. To view our company analysis and tracking mechanisms, please see: (http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/d atabasesrepot.html).

"Packet 5" info for H visas: Due to the workload increases on the FPU, Post elected to transfer our group and H Visa portfolio to the NIV section. During the transition phase, the new team borrowed from IV process the standard method of communicating with applicants through the use of information packets. Post developed a series of "Packet 5" information letters which help guide companies, applicants, and lawyers through the H2B, P, and crew visa process. For samples of Packet 5 letters, see:

(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/d
atabasesrepot.html)

"Chuck It" Day. Post introduced an annual "Chuck It Day" to
build on consular clean up and improved organization. In
November 2004, the Consular Section eliminated half a ton of
unclassified material, tracked and shipped to KCC 3,000 CAT-

1 files, shipped 44 boxes of NIV refusals and cleaned out 30
workspaces. CHUCK IT Day also laid the groundwork for a
cleaner future, putting in place a work plan to ship an
additional 6,000 CAT-1 files, establishing foil destruction
schedules and clearing out all community workspace. For
details on the process, with project tools, please see:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/c
onscleanup.html).

Online Standard Operating Procedures.   In August 2005, Post
introduced a new feature of its Consular Intranet, which was
developed in close conjunction with a very creative
Information Resource Management (IRM) team. The intranet
page is a user-friendly and intuitive, designed as a daily
guide on process and procedures for internal use and
continual updates to reflect fast-moving guidance from the
Department. The SOP page currently has over 90 up-to-date
SOPs, many of which have, in themselves, hyperlinks to the
Foreign Affairs Manual and other important reference
documents. Please
see:(http://sansalvador.state.gov/cons/sops).

More to come. Although still in process, the Consular
Section is working aggressively to implement two additional
major changes in the next fiscal year. In early 2005, we
plan to have full implementation of mandatory EVAF. Over
the past year, we conducted three separate line flow
analyses in preparation of this implementation, and will
conduct a fourth after implementation to track specific
returns. Our line flow studies can be found at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/w
orkflow.html). In the IV unit, we plan to have full
implementation of an outsourced appointment system on
December 15, 2005. The second phase of the outsourcing of
IV administration consists of outsourcing delivery of the
"Packet 4," or information packet for applicants. We are
currently working on a pilot project for this with Computer
Sciences Corporation, and it would be the first full-package
IV administration outsourcing solution globally.

H) What measures (i.e. metrics) are you using to manage
your work? Specifically, do you use the data available in
the CCD, Q-matic or other sources to monitor the
efficiency and effectiveness of your section and if so,
how?

The visa units regularly use information from the consular
systems and CCD to measure efficiency, review our
operational effectiveness, and to manage workload.

Operationally, the NIV unit relies heavily on the on-line
appointment system for quick answers to questions about
demand and backlog. NIV Supervisors also review several
reports generated by the NIV System on a daily basis,
overseeing employee productively (11C and 11D), printing of
foils, spoils and corrections, and workload summaries.
These reports are analyzed by Unit and Section management.

Similarly, the IV Unit relies upon the IV System to track
daily productivity in approvals and issuances, as well as
accountability functions such as exceptions reports and
corrections. The IV Team also depends on the reports of
applicants ready for interview Report 44 Applicants Subject
to Numerical Limitation Eligible for Appointments and Report
45, Applicants Not Subject to Numerical Limitation Eligible
for Appointments. This feature directly contributes to our
ability to outsource appointment scheduling to the Visa
Information Center without compromising internal controls.
We are able to send a list of all applicants eligible for
appointments, with only the information necessary for that
appointment scheduling (without access to the system). We
worked for several months with the Ad Hoc Reporting team in
the Department to create reports which would further assist
us in workload analysis, but found these reports somewhat
unwieldy.

The CCD is an invaluable tool that is used by everyone from
adjudicators at the window (especially now that it is linked
by applicant as we review hits) to our supervisors who
closely review all IV and NIV refusals and spot-check IV and
NIV approvals. Easy access to case notes and process
history are invaluable.

The CCD tools are also a huge asset to our Fraud Prevention
Unit. The CCD dramatically improved the efficiency of FPU
investigations and case resolution by providing "fingertip"
access to invaluable case notes on previous applications

that were often difficult - if not impossible - to retrieve.
The CCD also provides vastly-improved document retrieval
that allows FPU to quickly and efficiently retrieve I-275's
and other derogatory information from CLASS hits directly.
We look forward to CA incorporating an FPU case tracking
function to further reap the real and potential rewards of
this database for all posts.

- Have you developed your own metrics such as surveys,
error rates, etc? If so, what are those measures and how
are you using them?

The visa units have developed our own metrics on three
fronts. First, we track errors in data entry and
processing. See:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/w
orkflow.html). Second, we worked with Computer Sciences
Corporation's subcontractor for the Visa Information Center
- Teletech - to develop a customer service survey in order
to develop a rating of customer service for Post's
outsourcing appointment process. A copy of our current
survey can be found
at:(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offi ces/CONS/turnke
y/customerserv/servicesurvey.html). Third, we developed a
regular line flow analysis process by which we measure
average wait time for applicants (see below for more).

- Have you developed any post-specific management
information systems to track your progress? If so please
describe what you are doing with the tools and how they
have helped you.

Line flow analyses. The NIV and IV units use periodic,
regular line flow analyses to measure work and applicant
flow. To date, the NIV Unit has completed three data set
collections, and is currently analyzing the third data set.
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/w
orkflow.html). The IV Unit is currently developing the
first flow analysis based on statistics generated through
the IVO program, from 2000-2005.

Appointment and Backlog Tracking (IV and NIV). The NIV and
IV units also utilize appointment and backlog tracking tools
created at Post. These spreadsheets are used by Unit
Managers to plan appointment schedules, taking into
consideration visa demand, backlog (if applicable), general
staffing levels as well as other factors that affect visa
processing, such as holidays and high-level visits. The NIV
Unit has been using this tool since June 2005. The IV Unit
developed its own tracking tool based on NIV's tool, which
it began to use on a preliminary basis to aid in appointment
scheduling in September 2005. Copies of the NIV tool may be
found at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/w
orkflow.html).

Post is developing a number of databases, including a
revised FPU database (beta testing on behalf of New Delhi),
a group visa database, and a web-based correspondence
database.
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/d
atabasesrepot.html). To assist with our Consular Package
statistics, the Section created an in-house spreadsheet that
keeps a running, automated calculation of personnel hours
(FSN and Officer) by work unit and task. This is the first
year we've used this spreadsheet, and will better be able to
advise regarding its utility after the completion of this
year's Consular Package. A copy of our current spreadsheet
may be found at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/mgt/appoi
ntments.html).

I) Please advise whether and why post might benefit from a
Consular Management Assistance Team (CMAT) visit. (By
year's end, CMAT's will have visited more than 85 posts
since their inception. If a CMAT visited your post over
the past year, please summarize any benefits and what
steps, if any, could be taken to further enhance the
productivity of CMAT visits.)

Consular section San Salvador would welcome a CMAT visit and
anticipates benefiting from such an outside assessment of
our procedures. The inauguration of entirely new procedures
such a facial recognition and preparations for the expansion
of biometric scanning to ten digits have created
opportunities for CMAT insights.

Any expertise the CMAT could share on the CAJE process would
be valuable as well, since we desire a more effective and
equitable structure for the consular FSN workforce.

All the above said, Post is anticipating an OIG visit
sometime from February 7 through 22, 2006; this scheduled
OIG visit may preclude a CMAT at this time.

J) Training:

-    Please summarize post's program of training and
orientation for new consular officers. Have FSI's on-the-
job training modules proven useful at post?

Training is a top priority for the Consular Section. We
instituted a diverse and inclusive training program that
seeks to deepen the knowledge of staff and sharpen skills,
while also supporting long term professional development.
The main components of the training program are: substantive
(focused on knowledge development and
management/leadership), language, technical training, and
cross-unit job skills training. We also have introductory
training for new employees. See the cable on our training
program at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/e
mbassycables.html).

The Consular Section conducts weekly seminars and subject-
oriented training which seek to deepen the knowledge base
among staff and to teach management and leadership skills.
Some examples of popular seminars are the Consul General's
"Monkey Management" trainings (see San Salvador 2092 and our
website at
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/mgt/monke
y/index.html). FSN staff is enrolled in several
correspondence courses, including 25 FSNs who are currently
enrolled in PC104 - Overseas Citizens Services. During this
fiscal year, five FSNs successfully completed PC102 -
Immigration Law & Visa Operations.

Second, the Section takes its language training seriously.
Out of 42 eligible employees in the Section, 16 recently
completed or are currently enrolled in language training.
This includes four FSOs who have completed FSI's Spanish
Reading Maintenance Course. An additional opportunity for
language development is our active outreach program, which
was described in a 2005 cable entitled, "3,000,000
Salvadorans Asked to Tell the Truth."
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/turnkey/e
mbassycables.html).   Every Wednesday, Officers travel
outside of the Embassy to appear on radio, television and
webchats to explain the visa process and answer questions
about applications, laws, and consular requirements.

Technical training and cross-unit skills development is also
critical to the successful operation of the unit. Working
closely with the office of Information Resource Management
(IRM), 26 employees completed courses in software programs
such as Excel, PowerPoint and Word. We also created unique
cross-training programs for rotational FSNs, which ensures
depth among our local staff.

Another innovative cross-unit training program is our
"Airport Visit Program," which trains officers and
interested FSNs in fraud detection. Every two weeks,
officers and FSNs travel to the Comalapa International
airport to confer with and train various airport and airline
officials and to observe migration officials, customs, and
airport counter personnel and procedures. (See program
description and brochures at
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/section-
wide/airport.html).

In addition to the training element, this program
strengthened Post's cooperation and communication with the
airport authorities. As a result of the program, Post now
receives regular information on false visas, false
passports, and fraud trends from the El Salvador Border
Police, Airport Security, Immigration, and the airlines.

Finally, Post developed introductory and refresher trainings
programs aimed to orient new employees and deepen the skills
of adjudicators. Specifically, we have a two-week
introductory program ("NIV 101") for all new NIV
adjudicators and a newly-implemented "NIV-102" for new
officers after three months of line adjudication, to deepen
skill set. Our new Spouse/MoH training course is ready for
its first run; the point of this training is to help adult
dependents of our newly-arrived officers understand post-
specific consular issues and to bring them proactively into
our consular family. We also continually revise our NIV
Training Manual that supports both of these training
programs. All of these materials are available at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/unitspec/
NIV/index.html).

-    Please comment on the effectiveness of FSI consular
training for consular personnel at post, including entry-
level officers, mid-level officers, and FSNs.

Some training is better than others. Consular systems
training at post by Harris Corporation is a bit weak for
personnel who do not use the applications on a daily basis.

The trainers may assume too great a familiarity with pervious version of the applications by the consular staff they are attempting to train. Systems training at FSI, where more time is available, is better than the training conducted at Post. For cross-training purposes, we required all staff to receive training on all applications.

The regional management and leadership training conducted at Post was as effective as the similar training at FSI. A very worthwhile week.

Training at FSI in subjects such as assistance to victims of crime is especially beneficial. Other FSI consular training -- advanced name checking, consular systems -- is good. Additional training for officers, either at FSI or regionally, in Federal Benefits management might be useful.

The greatest improvement FSI could is to conduct even more FSN training sessions. Quite aside from improving their knowledge and skills, the morale and networking benefits from this training is immeasurable. While more regional training opportunities for FSNs are also valuable, FSI training is preferable. Unfortunately, Post finds too often that demand well outstrips FSI FSN training slots, and we have been less than successful in getting our FSNs into the training we believe they need. We recommend more frequent training and/or larger classes.

Systems:

K) Do you have the equipment you need to meet consular MPP objectives? If not, please describe the equipment you need and efforts you have made to obtain it.

Yes. However, if/when the number of ACS and visa interview windows increases, San Salvador will need additional equipment to make those areas functional.

L) What public address/microphone system(s) are you using? What are the strong and weak points of the system? (CA/EX is working with OBO and FSI/SPAS/CONS to improve microphone systems worldwide. Input from posts will be most valuable as we continue this work).

With CA/EX support, Post procured 19 TTU-3 JSD Talk-thru Intercom units, with 19 TTU-WHS Wireless Headset Systems and 19 Clip-on Lavalieve Microphones from Northcon Communications. Also included in the order are 6 12'' Baffle Ceiling Speakers, 3 35-Watt Amplifiers for Paging Speakers, 5 Outdoor Paging Speakers and 4 Handsets with Hook Switches for a total price of $31,887.10. Installation is set for February 2006.

M) How would you rate your consular section's satisfaction with automated consular systems (excellent, good, average, poor)?
- Are there any unresolved software or hardware issues?
- How do you rate the training of post personnel both within the consular section and in Management/IM on the use and support of Consular systems (excellent, good, average, poor)?
- Please comment on the usefulness of the new ACRS Plus system (if installed at post.)

On the ACS side, our satisfaction with automated consular systems is low.

Complaints about the ACS automated systems include: the near impossibility of generating useful cables (including address groups) with the REPAT and EMDA loan applications; Post's inability to enter close-out or disbursal information in the REPAT and EMDA applications; difficulty in retrieving the details of Privacy Act waivers in arrest cases; and, the incomplete and arbitrary returns provided by the CLASSE name check system. An example of the latter is that after entering name, DPOB, gender and PPT number, Post received a "no hits" clearance for a man who actually is the subject of a P-H hit. The hit appeared only after the individual's social security number was added to the search criteria. CLASSE is also far too unforgiving if middle names are omitted or passports were issued prior to 1990.

A noteworthy exception to the poor overall rating of ACS automated systems is the PIERS system, which Post rates as excellent. The passport systems used to scan and transmit data to NPC for production of the photo-digitized passports also works well, although there are occasional glitches in the system.

For the NIV and IVO systems, recent upgrades greatly improved the usefulness of the system. In particular, the "Visa Revoke" function and the inclusion of the CCD tab on the namechecking screen are very useful.

Post would greatly benefit from improved reporting

capabilities within these systems. As we push to become
better managers and analysts, we consistently find that lack
of reports is a weakness in the preparation of reports on,
for instance, consular statistics, process and work flow.
As importantly, Post would find tremendous benefit from a
Fraud Prevention database that is linked to the ACS, NIV,
and IV systems. Currently, we expend far too much fraud
analyst time data-entering cases in preparation for
investigation and action. Furthermore, our standalone FPU
database makes it more difficult for adjudicators to access
full information regarding a fraud-referred case, past or
present.

N) What types of assistance would you need from the next
training and refresher teams coming from the consular
systems division to assist consular system users?
Please also comment on the quality of assistance provided
by the CA Overseas Help Desk.

The training and refresher teams should schedule more time
(double or triple current schedules) to train personnel on
the systems they do not use on a daily basis. Teams should
start with the expectation that those who do not use the
systems daily are not familiar with them.

The CA Overseas Help Desk always is timely in responding to
requests for assistance.

O) What strategies have you used to increase the use of
EVAF forms? If you do not use the EVAF, what obstacles
prevent you from doing so? Are there local conditions
(such as limited public access to the internet, or host
country blocking) that limit the utility of the EVAF?
Would you find direct on-line data entry for NIV applicants
(not requiring a printed 2D barcode) useful?

Post requires EVAF for all referrals from within the Embassy
community, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry
of Defense. We plan to implement mandatory EVAF for all
applicants in February 2006, which will be rolled out in
conjunction with an aggressive outreach campaign. In
particular, Post is taking strong steps to preclude an
increased incidence of fraud that could potentially result
from required EVAF in this largely rural country with
limited Internet penetration and relatively modest literacy
rate. We are in close contact with other Posts with similar
demographics (such as Honduras) and enjoyed learning from
their EVAF implementation experiences.
ACS:

P) What is unusual about your ACS work and how do you
manage it? Please comment on both the positive and
negative aspects of the new ACS Plus system (if installed
at post.)

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of routine ACS work in El
Salvador is the regular requirement -- at least once a week
and often several times each day -- to document first-time
passport applicants who were either born or naturalized in
the United States and traveled to El Salvador on either
their U.S. birth certificates or U.S. naturalization
certificates. This situation demands that ACS officers pay
particular attention to possible passport fraud.

Section 53.2(b) of 22 CFR allows U.S. citizens to travel
between the United States and any country in North, South or
Central America (except Cuba) without a U.S. passport.
Salvadoran law recognizes dual nationality and allows
persons who can demonstrate Salvadoran citizenship to enter
El Salvador with documents that indicate their Salvadoran
nationality. This includes U.S. birth certificates for
children born to a Salvadoran parent.

In practice, all airlines providing service between the
United States and El Salvador permit U.S.-Salvadoran dual
nationals to depart the U.S. without U.S. passports but
prevent them from boarding return flights unless they
possess a U.S. passport. Both naturalized adult Amcits and
minors born in the U.S. regularly come to the ACS unit for
first-time issuance of a U.S. passport. Confirming
citizenship documentation is relatively easy but confirming
the identity of these applicants, especially very young
children, is often problematic. We resolve these situations
by requesting DHS to verify naturalization certificates, by
asking CA/OCS/ACS to verify U.S. birth certificate, by
intensive interviews with applicants, and by spending an
inordinate amount of time on each case. DNA is used on
occasion.

Communicating quickly and effectively with the private Amcit
community in El Salvador is another challenge for the ACS
unit. The ACS unit currently has 57 wardens to help it
communicate with the estimated 18,000 private Amcits in the
country. A large proportion of the general Amcit community

has neither fax or e-mail capabilities, and many cannot be reached directly by telephone. We do not effectively manage this situation; it remains beyond the resources of both Post and our most dedicated wardens.

Although an earthquake prone country, El Salvador fortunately has not experienced a major quake since 2001. Nevertheless, all members of the ACS staff are mindful that a disaster, natural or otherwise, could occur at any time and would pose a monumental challenge to their professional abilities. We plan a crisis management exercise in early 2006 to help us prepare for this eventuality.

Post does not yet have ACS Plus.

Q) Please comment on how you have managed the responsibilities involved in providing assistance to Americans who are the victims of violent crime or terrorism, as well as the additional reporting requirements (for example, in death cases or serious crimes).

We are lucky to experience few instances in which Americans have been the victims of violent crimes. When we have such cases we dedicate an FSN and consular officer to work directly with the victims and their family until the immediate crisis is over. This could involve accompanying victim to the forensic medical facility, the police and the public prosecutor and helping them secure safe, temporary lodging. We offer time to consular staff to obtain professional counseling if their duties assisting assist victims appear more emotionally upsetting than usual. (It is always unsettling.)

We receive timely and tremendously helpful support from the Assistance for Victims of Crime staff in CA/OCS/PRI.

Current reporting requirements had a negligible impact on the ACS workload.

Visas:

R) Please describe how your NIV workflow has changed over the last year. How long does it take to conduct a typical B1/B2 interview at your post?

The NIV workflow has been steady this year over last year. Our workload from October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2005 was 59,154 total adjudications compared to 63,139 from October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2004. This represents a difference of 3,985 or a 6% decrease. This decrease is somewhat misleading, however. We estimate that the workload remained steady or slightly increased due to the last remains of the mail-in, or "buzon" program which post ended due to excessive fraud. These remainders during the last FY distorted the number of applications upwards as the trailing mail-in applications were adjudicated twice (that is, they were first refused 221(g) in the system and then later reviewed and issued/refused when the applicants came back in person), the previous years' numbers are somewhat distorted in terms of workload. If you correct for the disproportionately high number of overcomes program, the actual decrease in adjudications is 1,962, or a mere 3% decrease. Additionally, since we are now interviewing all applicants (except particular categories such as some A and G visa applicants), our workload is higher in terms of total live interviews conducted.

Across all interviewers, the average B1/B2 interview takes approximately 2.5 minutes.

-    What business facilitation programs do you have in place?

Post began a business facilitation program in September ¶2004. The objective of the program is to prescreen U.S. companies with the goal of expediting the visa process for non immigrant visas required for training and conducting business in the United States. After one year in place, the program has not been enthusiastically embraced by U.S. business. While successful business facilitation programs at other Posts were able to offer businesses the benefit of expedited appointments, this was not a draw to the program since San Salvador has only a two-day wait. We are exploring with Foreign Commercial Service and the Economic Section, as well as local AmCham, what else we might offer to U.S. businesses that would be of value to them.

-    What is the process for requesting an expedited appointment for students, business travelers and emergency cases? Please provide the web link for your NIV services.

Currently, Embassy San Salvador has a two-day waiting period for non immigrant visa interviews. Applicants are asked to

contact our Visa Information Center to make an appointment; during the call, the operations routinely ask the applicants if there is an emergency requiring an expedited (next day) appointment or if the applicant is a student, at which time the applicant can be scheduled for any day that the Embassy is open. For more information on our NIV Services, please see: (http://sansalvador.usembassy.gov/consular/en glish/visano/in dex.html#application).

S) Ten print fingerscans is a requirement for the future. What changes will you have to make to accommodate that change? The new system will entail a reader that is 8.5 inches deep by 11 inches wide and almost five inches tall and will require dedicated power requirements. Will you be able to adapt the windows with the services available at post or will you require CA/EX/CSD support with the systems or OBO support for construction?

Post is very pleased to have the opportunity to serve as a pilot program for ten print fingerscans in early 2006. We are currently rewiring our NIV and IV interviewing windows to prepare for this pilot project. Additional counter space may also be required. Depending upon the additional processing time required by the ten (vice two) print process, our need for additional window space may be more pressing.

-    How are the new requirements on facial recognition impacting your work? Do you feel that the adjudicating officers have the skills to make these determinations? For the most part, the requirements of facial recognition do not slow our normal issuance process for non immigrant visas. Occasionally - in emergency cases - we manually check facial recognition. These manual facial recognition checks are completed by either the Visa Supervisor or NIV Line Chief and both of these managers have the skills to make these determinations. However, it would be helpful to have additional (perhaps online) training on imposter detection and facial recognition for officers more generally.

On occasion, facial recognition and IDENT can both slow the process for issuing emergency visas. However, this is not often and occurs perhaps five times a month.

T) What is the status of your IV workload? If you have a backlog of IV cases due to the approval by USCIS of an unusually large number of petitions in FY 2005, please discuss your plans and time-lines for working out the backlog.

Post's IV workload more than doubled since the last fiscal year, growing from 3,206 total applicants in FY 2004 to 6,919 in FY 2005. Despite our best efforts, this rapid caseload growth strains Post's resources and created a slight backlog. To combat this problem, Post is aggressively implementing resource-saving processes, including the outsourcing of all appointment scheduling and information delivery to applicants.

Also of note is that Post is experiencing a significant increase in the number of overcomes, created by unprepared applicants, applicants requiring waivers, and increased strictness in legal and documentary requirements in the post-September 11 era. We estimate that approximately 60% of our applicants require additional documents or processing (e.g., fingerprints, waivers) after their interview at the Embassy with an Officer. Obviously, these factors inflate our already-increasing workload, as Officers adjudicate these cases twice and FSNs must manage several administrative processes on the back-end.

-    What is your policy on accepting petitions filed at post? How long do you take to process them and what is the impact on your visa section?

On this particular issue, Post enjoys a close working relationship with a local USCIS office of the Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for accepting petitions within El Salvador.

U) Please discuss the status of your DV workload (i.e. growing, stable or shrinking).

Not applicable.

V) Please discuss any issues or concerns you have with third country national cases.

Third Country Nationals

We have not observed a particularly high incidence of fraud among third country national cases; this might be because we also have a relatively high refusal rate and an active Fraud Prevention Unit, which may deter mala fide third country

nationals from applying at Post. Third country nationals
make up only 2% of our total NIV applicant pool, a total of
890 applicants for FY 2005. Of those third country
nationals, 95 Guatemalan nationals applied, 68 nationals
from Mexico (often dual Mexico-El Salvador citizens), and
Taiwan and Colombia each accounted for 78 applicants.
Combined, these top four third country sources for
applicants comprised a mere .005% of our total applicant
pool.

Fraud Prevention:

W) Please comment on the support provided to your post by
CA/FPP to combat consular fraud. What additional
assistance from the Department might benefit post's fraud
prevention program?
CA/FPP provides support in the form of information
dissemination. The weekly "Consular Fraud Reports" and the
"Fraud Digest" provide important information on specific
topics as well as general trends. CA/FPP also updates the
Fraud E-Room regularly.

More centralized programs that attempt to institutionalize
fraud procedures would be useful. Many posts have developed
their own SOPs, yet a standardized handbook for fraud issues
would be extremely useful for FPMs and FPU staff.

The CCD-based Fraud Case Tracking system being discussed
(and hopefully developed) would be invaluable to all posts
for consolidating and sharing information.

Also more interaction from the desks at FPP would be useful
in initiating FPM discussion on regional issues. Currently
issues are raised on an ad-hoc basis and the discussion is
sometimes lost on all but the few FPMs participating. The E-
Room is a great forum for this discussion, but perhaps it is
not used enough.

- Please provide reference numbers for the last four
general fraud-reporting cables that you have submitted and
any cables that discuss validation studies at your post.

SAN SALVADOR 1086
SAN SALVADOR 2718
SAN SALVADOR 2942
SAN SALVADOR 3283

In addition the FPU generates a monthly newsletter
distributed around the world to other posts and other USG
agencies. The newsletter highlights FPU cases, activities,
and fraud trends. Our latest newsletters can be found at:
(http://sansalvador.state.gov/content/offices /CONS/unitspec/
Fraud/newsletters.html).

General:

X) Describe country conditions that affect your ability to
provide consular services (infrastructure, fraud, political
setting, etc).

El Salvador is a relatively poor third world country -- per
capita income was 2,258 US dollars in 2003. Paying 30
dollars for a notarial or 147 dollars for a CROBA and PPT
can be burdensomely expensive for a fair number of resident
dual national Amcits.

El Salvador is beset by gang-related crime, from extortion
demanded from public transportation drivers and small
business owners to murders that in 2005 give El Salvador the
highest homicide rate in Latin America. This makes some
sections of metropolitan San Salvador dangerous for Amcit
residents and risky for consular officials attempting to
provide services in those locations. Similar conditions
exist in some areas outside the capital.

The judicial system in El Salvador is subject to corruption,
cultural bias, and political and economic influence. Amcit
and LPR alien smugglers who have fraudulently obtained U.S.
passports for the minor children of Salvadoran adults
illegally living in the US are routinely released by the
courts. This demoralizes the Salvadoran police and
encourages both passport fraud and further alien smuggling.

While the road system is good by third world standards and
the country is small, travel from remote areas to the
capital can take three hours or more by car and considerably
longer by public transportation. For many rural residents,
including Amcits or the Salvadoran guardians of Amcit
minors, travel to the US Embassy is considered both time-
consuming and expensive. Many rural residents have no
telephone or internet access.

Many US-Salvadoran dual nationals who are resident in El
Salvador allow their US passports to remain expired for
years before renewing them. This is especially true for the

passports of dual national children. When asked why they waited so long to renew the passports, applicants frequently explain that they had no plans to travel and therefore did not need a current passport.

A high illiteracy rate may make it difficult to communicate in writing with visa applicants, and often leads applicants into the hands of unscrupulous visa "processors."

Independent reports claim as many as 500 Salvadorans leave El Salvador every day to attempt to enter the U.S. illegally. Coyotes are considered heroes, and anecdotal evidence of entire villages of only elderly and children underscore the prevalence of illegal immigration. Such demand leads to a plethora of fake visas, fake entry/exit stamps and fake U.S. passports. The base civil documents (police records, birth certificates, etc) are nearly worthless due to fraud and malfeasance within Salvadoran institutes. While National Police elements are willing to arrest fraudulent document vendors and holder (a new Salvadoran National Police/Consular program initiated this year resulted in 15 arrests in the past six months), convictions are nonexistent. This highlights the increased demand on Consular - especially FPU - resources throughout our Section.

Adding to the fraud work is our work with police and other USG entities to tackle the gang issue. This workload includes, but is not limited to, massive coordination of P212(a)3(A)(ii) entries into the system, cooperation on specific gang cases with local and USG law enforcement, and developing new procedures and strategy on the effective use of the 212(a)(3)(A)(ii) ineligibility.

Y) Describe any other issue not raised in the preceding questions that you believe to be significant to the consular section's effectiveness in handling its responsibilities.

The effect of DHS reconfiguration would be hard to understate. While our DHS offices at Post (both USCIS and ICE) work well with all relevant consular units, cooperation could be better. Crossover of responsibilities, and confusion over such responsibilities, might be relieved somewhat by clearer guidance going from DHS Headquarters to their own members in the field. For example, the Consular Section routinely receives requests from state-side DHS offices to provide investigative support on TPS petitioners. We field inquiries on passport fraud or receive tips on visa scams, only to find that DHS elements have been running investigations for months (or years) unbeknownst to our Section.

Our work focusing on gangs and use of the P212(a)3(A)(ii) finding of ineligibility for active gang members has garnished a lot of queries from around the region. If CA and regional posts would find it useful, Post would be willing to organize a consular-specific gang conference to help train other regional posts on using this ineligibility and on the MO of Salvadoran gangs which operate throughout the region.

BARCLAY